

Message Text

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ACTION VO-03

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6629

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 MEXICO 10092

FOR DIRECTOR GENERAL LAISE AND THE ADMINISTRATOR, SCA FROM AMB JOVA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CVIS, APER, MX

SUBJ: NONIMMIGRANT VISAS IN MEXICO CITY - THE FUTURE

REF: STATE 188088; MEXICO 9409

SUMMARY: PRESENT AND PROJECTED NIV WORKLOADS IN MEXICO CITY INDICATE THAT THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF VISA PROCESSING WILL BECOME UNWORKABLE IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. THERE IS ALSO REASON TO QUESTION WHETHER THE VISA FUNCTION SERVES ANY USEFUL PURPOSE IN MEXICO BECAUSE OF THE LARGE NUMBER OF ILLEGAL MEXICANS IN THE US. WHO HAVE AVOIDED THE VISA PROCESS ALTOGETHER. ALTERNATIVES ARE DISCUSSED, AMONG THEM THE ABOLITION OF THE VISA REQUIREMENT FOR MEXICAN NATIONALS. EN SUMMARY.

1. THE DEPARTMENT'S REFTEL FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL TO AMBASSADOR JOVA REFERRED TO FUTURE COMMUNICATIONS ON SPECIFIC PROBLEMS AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS RE CONSULAR STAFFING AND WORKLOADS HERE. THE FOLLOWING, WHICH MAY BE HELPFUL, REFLECTS THE EMBASSY'S VIEW OF THE NONIMMIGRANT VISA SITUATION IN MEXICO CITY.

2. THE PRESENT SITUATION

THE EMBASSY IS NOW IN THE MIDST OF THE GREATEST VISA RUSH

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IN ITS HISTORY HAVING SURPASSED BY MORE THAN 6,000 APPLI-

CATIONS THE RECORD 29,589 APPLICATIONS PROCESSED IN JULY 1975. MOST OF THESE REQUIRED PERSONAL INTERVIEWS. IN HUMAN TERMS, THIS MEANS THAT DURING THE FIRST TWO WEEKS OF JULY 1976, A CROWD OF ABOUT 1000 APPLICANTS WAS WAITING OUTSIDE THE EMBASSY BEFORE IT OPENED, FORMING A LINE SEVERAL BLOCKS LONG. EACH DAY, THIS INITIAL CROWD WAS TAKEN IN AND PROCESSED AND AN EQUIVALENT NUMBER OF LATER ARRIVALS ADMITTED, FOR TOTALS OF UP TO AND EXCEEDING 1,500 PERSONAL INTERVIEWS PER DAY. THESE APPLICATIONS WERE NORMALLY GONE BY TWO-THIRTY P.M. AFTER WHICH OFFICERS WORKED ON THE HUNDREDS OF APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED BY TRAVEL AGENCIES AND OTHERS. THIS WAS ACCOMPLISHED DESPITE VACANCIES IN ONE LINE OFFICER POSITION AND IN THE POSITION OF THE CHIEF OF THE NIV UNIT, IN ADDITION TO A LONG-STANDING VACANCY IN THE FRAUD OFFICER SLOT. TO STATE THE OBVIOUS, IT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN DONE WITHOUT A STREAMLINING OF PROCEDURES, BORROWING OFFICERS FOR A FEW HOURS AT A TIME FROM OTHER AREAS OF THE CONSULAR SECTION, AND A YEOMAN EFFORT BY THE LINE OFFICERS, LOCAL STAFF AND TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES.

3. WHAT NEXT?

SOME SATISFACTION CAN BE TAKEN FROM THE FACT THAT THE PRESENT PROCEDURES IN MEXICO CITY WERE EQUAL TO THE TASK AND, AS PROJECTED IN OUR MOST RECENT CONSULAR PACKAGE, PROBABLY WILL BE FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS. BUT THE OVERALL NIV PICTURE IN MEXICO CITY OFFERS MORE GROUNDS FOR UNEASINESS THAN COMPLACENCY. THE ANNUAL GROWTH RATE OF THE NIV WORKLOAD FOR CALENDAR YEAR 1975 WAS 14 PERCENT. DESPITE THE INCREASED USE OF FOUR-YEAR-MULTIPLE VISAS, THE GROWTH RATE FOR CALENDAR YEAR 1976 TO DATE IS 24 PERCENT. EVEN IF WE PROJECT THE GROWTH RATE IN NONIMMIGRANT VISAS BY THE 20 PERCENT PER YEAR USED IN THE CONSULAR PACKAGE, THE ANNUAL TOTAL OF APPLICATIONS WOULD BE 625,000 IN FIVE YEARS, AND 1,500,000 IN TEN YEARS. THERE ARE NO GROUNDS FOR ASSUMING THAT THE NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS WILL NOT CONTINUE TO GROW AT THIS RATE OR HIGHER. THE POPULATION OF MEXICO IS DOUBLING EVERY TWENTY YEARS AND 50 PERCENT OF THE PRESENT POPULATION IS UNDER FIFTEEN YEARS OF AGE. THE COUNTRY-WIDE EXPERIMENT WITH BORDER CROSSING CARDS DID NOT,

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AS SOME EXPECTED, SATURATE MEXICO WITH NONIMMIGRANT ENTRY DOCUMENTS AND SLOW DOWN THE RATE OF NEW APPLICATIONS. DEVALUATION OF THE PESO OR A SEVERE DEPRESSION MIGHT DETER BONAFIDE TOURISTS FOR A TIME, BUT THIS EFFECT IS NOT CERTAIN. THE QUADRUPLING IN PRICE OF THE MEXICAN PASSPORT, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS DONE NOTHING AT ALL TO DETER TRAVEL. THE SAFE BET STILL APPEARS TO BE ON A CONTINUING YEARLY INCREASE IN APPLICATIONS.

4. ANOTHER ASPECT OF THE PROBLEM HERE, AS POINTED OUT IN OUR A-14 OF JANUARY 26, 1976, IS THE EXTREME WORKLOAD FLUCTUATION BETWEEN MONTHS, BOTH IN TOTAL WORKLOAD AND IN INCREASES OVER PAST YEARS. THE MONTHS OF JULY, DECEMBER AND THE MONTH IN WHICH EASTER FALLS, TRADITIONALLY ACCOUNT FOR ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF OUR YEAR'S WORKLOAD. DECEMBER AND THE EASTER PERIOD THIS YEAR WERE UP 45 AND 50 PERCENT, RESPECTIVELY, OVER THE PRECEDING YEAR. IF THE VOLUME OF APPLICANTS FOR THIS JULY IS PROJECTED AT ONLY A 20 PERCENT INCREASE RATE, WE CAN EXPECT TO SEE A SINGLE MONTH OF 100,000 APPLICATIONS IN FIVE YEARS AND A QUARTER OF A MILLION APPLICATIONS IN JULY TEN YEARS FROM NOW.

5. IF WE CONTINUE WITH THE SAME VISA PROCEDURES, THERE WILL BE TWO ALTERNATIVES: EXPAND THE NIV UNIT TO ABOUT 200 OFFICERS AND STAFF HOUSED IN A RADICALLY DIFFERENT STRUCTURE OR REFUSE TO PROCESS MORE THAN LIMITED STAFFING ALLOWS, WITH ATTENDANT MOB SCENES, UNFAVORABLE PUBLICITY, AND A LOSS OF POTENTIALLY LUCRATIVE TOURIST SPENDING IN THE U.S.

6. IN ANALYZING ANY FUNCTION, HOWEVER, IT IS EASIER TO START WITH THE MOST BASIC QUESTIONS: WHAT IS THE WORK SUPPOSED TO BE ACCOMPLISHING, AND, IS IT WORTH DOING?

7. THE ILLEGAL ALIEN PROBLEM AND NONIMMIGRANT VISAS.

THE PURPOSE OF NONIMMIGRANT VISA PROCESSING IS ASSUMED TO BE PRIMARILY THE SCREENING OUT OF ILLEGAL ALIENS WHO WANT TO MISUSE AN NIV AND WORK ILLEGALLY IN THE UNITED STATES. OF THE NEARLY 250,000 APPLICANTS A YEAR WHO APPLY AT THE EMBASSY, OVER 90 PERCENT ARE ISSUED VISAS. A SURVEY OF 823 UNCLASSIFIED

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IMMIGRANT VISA APPLICANTS HERE HAS SO FAR SHOWN THAT VERY FEW (10 PERCENT) ORIGINALLY ENTERED THE US. AND OVERSTAYED ON NONIMMIGRANT DOCUMENTATION ALTHOUGH 62 PERCENT HAD BEEN LIVING IN THE US. ILLEGALLY. CONTRASTED WITH THE VARYING ESTIMATES OF MILLIONS OF MEXICAN ILLEGAL ALIENS IN THE US., THE TOTAL OF AROUND 20,000 REFUSED APPLICANTS IN MEXICO CITY BECOMES VIRTUALLY MEANINGLESS AND BRINGS UP THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE EXPENDITURE OF MONEY AND MANPOWER USED TO SCREEN OUT A NUMBER EQUAL TO AT MOST ONE-HALF OF ONE PERCENT OF THE NUMBER OF MEXICAN ILLEGAL ALIENS BELIEVED TO BE IN THE US. AT ANY GIVEN TIME IS JUSTIFIED. INS ESTIMATES THAT AT LEAST 80 PERCENT OF THE ESTIMATED MINIMUM OF SIX MILLION ILLEGAL MEXICANS IN THE US. (90 PERCENT OF ALL ILLEGAL ALIENS), ENTERED WITHOUT A VISA AND THAT 10 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION OF MEXICO IS CURRENTLY

LIVING ILLEGALLY IN THE US. EVEN THOUGH THIS MEANS IT IS
THEORETICALLY POSSIBLE THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF THEM OVERSTAY
OR OTHERWISE MISUSE A NONIMMIGRANT VISA, IT IS STILL POSSIBLE
TO CONCLUDE THAT:

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(A) THE VISA PROCESS DOES NOTHING TO DETER THE VAST MAJORITY
OF INTENDING ILLEGAL ALIENS, BECAUSE THEY NEVER COME IN
CONTACT WITH IT.

(B) A VERY GREAT NUMBER OF ALIENS ENTERING THE US. WITH NON-
IMMIGRANT DOCUMENTATION POSSESS NOT A VISA, BUT A BORDER
CROSSING CARD ISSUED EITHER DIRECTLY BY THE INS OR UNDER
THEIR AUTHORITY. IN THE CASE OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ISSUED
A BCC BY AN INS BORDER POST, THEY HAVE NEVER BEEN EXPOSED
TO STATE'S VISA PROCESS.

(C) IF MEXICO CITY'S REFUSAL RATE IS APPROXIMATELY CORRECT,
AND WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS, WE ARE, IN EFFECT, COMPELLING
LARGELY BONAFIDE TOURISTS TO APPLY FOR VISAS WHILE THE
INTENDING LAWBREAKERS AVOID THE WHOLE PROCESS. IF OUR REFUSAL
RATE WERE TOO LOW, ON THE OTHER HAND, IT WOULD MEAN THAT
DURING A ONE OR TWO-MINUTE INTERVIEW WE ARE INCAPABLE
OF DETECTING BONAFIDE APPLICANTS FROM THOSE WHO ARE NOT
BONAFIDE AND THUS THE VISA PROCESS WOULD BE EVEN MORE
MEANINGLESS.

8. WE THINK THERE ARE GROUNDS FOR THE ARGUMENT THAT, AS
IN THE CASE OF CANADIANS, FOR WHOM NO TOURIST VISA IS
REQUIRED, A COUNTRY WITH A LONG, CONTIGUOUS BORDER WITH

THE UNITED STATES CANNOT LOGICALLY HAVE THE SAME VISA REQUIREMENTS AS OTHER NATIONS. THE OBVIOUS DIFFERENCES IN THE PAST PERFORMANCE OF CANADIAN AND MEXICAN TRAVELLERS DOES NOT AFFECT THIS ARGUMENT IF, IN FACT, QUALIFIED TOURISTS

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ARE GOING TO BE INCREASINGLY INCONVENIENCED WHILE ILLEGAL ALIENS CONTINUE TO POUR INTO THE US. BY THE MILLIONS. IF THE SOLUTION OF CORRECTIVE LEGISLATION PROHIBITING ILLEGAL EMPLOYMENT IS NOT JUST AROUND THE CORNER, THERE MAY BE NO GOOD REASON TO WAIT FOR IT.

9. THE EMBASSY SUGGESTS THAT "M" AND/OR THE NEW RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AREA OF SCA LOOK INTO THE AREA OF A NEW, EASY-TO-ISSUE DOCUMENT FOR MEXICANS OR THE ABOLITION OF ANY DOCUMENTATION AT ALL, OTHER THAN A PASSPORT. INTERIM TECHNICAL MEASURES, SUCH AS THE SUBSTITUTION OF CATHODE RAY TUBE COMPUTER CHECKS INSTEAD OF THE PRESENT TAPE-CUTTING PROCESS AND AN AUTOMATED STAMPING PROCESS COULD ONLY PROLONG THE INEVITABLE FOR A TIME. FOR THE LONG RUN, IT APPEARS TO US EITHER THAT A CHANGE IN LEGISLATION IS NEEDED TO PERMIT THE ABOLITION OF THE VISA REQUIREMENT FOR MEXICO ON A TRIAL BASIS OR DRASTIC SHORTCUTS WILL HAVE TO BE TAKEN WHICH WILL NARROWLY FIT WITHIN THE PRESENT LEGAL REQUIREMENTS, BUT WHICH WILL ALLOW FOR LESS PAPERWORK, INTERVIEWS AND PROCESSING.

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